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ABSTRACT

In a discussion of the implications of future trends on the profession of leisure and recreation services, consideration is given to possible world developments, both catastrophic and benign. Proposals and suggestions are made for improving leisure services, including the involvement of educators in political action and increased research and evaluation of human behavior in leisure settings. It is pointed out that since financial resources for leisure and recreation will probably shrink, imaginative planning and use of present and future resources will be essential. (JD)

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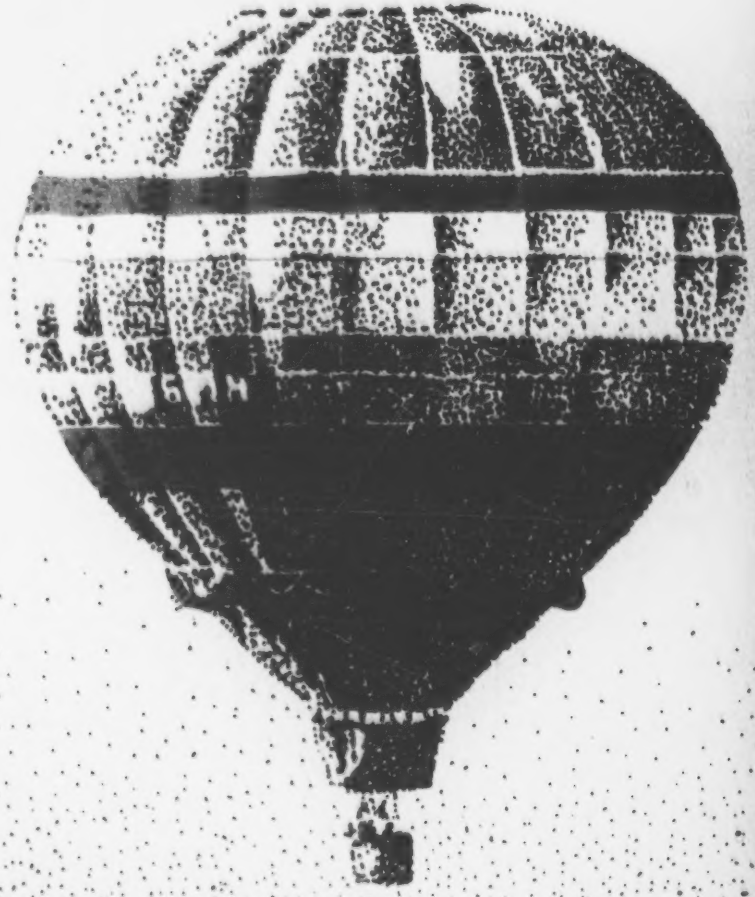
J.B. Nash

Scholar Lecture



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DREAMING OF THE FUTURE

By

JOSEPH J. BANNON
University of Illinois

Presented to
American Association for Leisure and Recreation

J.B. NASH SCHOLAR LECTURE

April 1987
Las Vegas, Nevada

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"I like the dreams of the future
better than the history of the past."

Thomas Jefferson

Dreams and Nightmares

Like Thomas Jefferson, I like dreaming and planning for the future better than regretting or recapturing the past. However, one must have specific dreams before they can come true. This means that we must learn to formulate progressive visions of what we want to see develop, as well as what is likely to develop. This is, the future is not a predetermined destiny toward which we are all helplessly heading. Alvin Toffler, in his phenomenally successful Future Shock and more recently in The Third Wave, has made us all more future-conscious. Toffler does not beckon us to break with the past or to ignore the present, as much as he beckons us to focus on the increasingly

more rapid arrival of the future. At one time, the future was a vague block of time very far away, a never-never land captured only in science or utopian fiction. Until recent years, it was considered pure fantasy. The more serious critical attention given to science fiction in recent years, for instance, is not from any lack of other quality fiction in our society. In our urgent need for clearer visions of the so-called far future -- which becomes the near or actual future with breathtaking speed -- science fiction offers a wealth of sustained, imaginative speculation and conjecture on which we desperately need to draw.

Post-war think tanks were often criticized for thinking the unthinkable, notably of nuclear disaster and its aftermath. It was argued that thinking the

unthinkable (or unbearable) would become second nature to us, that this would be taken for granted by most citizens, and that we would readily lose our capacity as a nation to resist the unthinkable. Rather than debilitating us as a people, thinking the unthinkable, the impossible, the unlikely, or whatever, has made crucial and uncertain issues an active part of public discourse. To paraphrase Plato: if you are able to think something, you should not hesitate to speak of it merely because others are not ready to hear it.

At the close of Future Shock, Toffler strongly urges his readers to create and participate in a wide variety of future-planning groups such as committees, councils, and organizations from the community level up, including worldwide consortiums concerned with future plans and issues. Through habitual and regular participation in such groups, especially at the local

level, it would become second nature for all of us to think that the impossible might likely become possible, to imagine a future within our power to create and shape. The two most difficult aspects of futurist thinking, which I believe all of us experience, is the actual mental effort involved in consciously forward-looking thinking, as well as a belief that such conceptual speculation will make any difference at all. Breaking that mental barrier or skepticism is not easy, I assure you. What is so enticing about Toffler's work, especially Future Shock, is to read the revolutionary insights of someone who has broken those barriers. The richness and tempo of his speculations and predictions on the nonforeseeable future are breathtaking and quite contagious.

Think about the future, now, this minute. How do

you perceive it? Remember when the idea of 1984 seemed a far-off, frightening prospect? Do you remember 1974? What happened to you then, how old were you, where were you? That was only 13 years ago. Going forward only 13 years brings us to 2000, a year that is still considered in the realm of the far future. Even the number 2000 seems impossible. We would rarely say "The Year 1987", but we have had drummed into us "The Year 2000" for several decades now. By "The Year 2000", this or that shall occur.....It has an ominous sound, as if whatever will take place is out of our hands or out of control generally. By 2000 most of you in the audience will be in your prime, "Your Middle Years", and some fewer of us will be retired. If the trends in improved health, nutrition, and longevity continue another 13 years, your prime years are likely to find you as healthful

and active as you are now. More about that later.

In line with the advice of Toffler, the World Future Associations recently held a futurist conference of 300 scientists. These scientists were asked to answer two questions in terms of the future:

1. What are the five greatest potential inventions and innovations that can affect the future?
2. What are the five greatest potential disasters that can affect the future?

Their ten answers are immensely interesting and valuable, not only in terms of our nation and the world, but more specifically for us as leisure and recreation specialists.

First, the likely innovations:

Innovation One

An anti-aging pill that would not only slow the

aging process, but also reverse aging. This innovation is not far-flung or fantastic, but it is already the focus of much gerontological research. If not a pill, then certainly an anti-aging diet or lifestyle. A recently popularized review of such biomedical research was Dr. Roy L. Walford's Maximum Life-Span (1983). In this book, Dr. Walford argues and presents evidence to show that the biomedical sciences are "on the brink of a breakthrough in the aging process". Other than our own likely vitality and rejuvenation, how does this veritable Fountain of Youth affect us as a profession?

We already see a wide range of programs and activities for older citizens who refuse to act or be "old" in any traditional sense. The list of programs and activities at any local recreation center or senior citizen center would shame many of us in our

more active years. It tires me sometimes just to read them! The anti-aging prognosis will, in essence, create a different type of population for us to serve, one that can no longer be easily divided into neat chronological categories. Gloria Steinhem, long-time editor of Ms. magazine, was asked on her fiftieth birthday about her "secrets" for such lasting beauty and vitality. Her answer was simple: "This is what fifty looks like now". At 88 George Burns wrote his best seller, How to Live to be 100 or More: The Ultimate Diet, Sex, and Exercise Book. Women in industrialized countries are no longer worn out prematurely from excessive child-bearing, poor nutrition, or arduous household tasks. People who feel like Gloria Steinhem--or seventy-- are not likely to want to collapse at the end of the day or week. These persons will dramatically increase the

population we now serve, demanding variety and quantity in our offerings.

Innovation Two

Controlled fusion of the atom, which will allow clean energy at a low cost. As a profession intimately concerned and involved in environmental issues, this innovation could reduce or eliminate our present fears about diappearing, non-renewable resources. It would allow us to shift our personal energies and attention to ways to capture this cleaner power for leisure resources and activities. Combining anti-aging research with solar or cleaner nuclear energy might find long-lived citizens not in nursing homes but in solariums or greenhouses, participating in community gardening all winter. Not only tending flowers, but growing and conducting research on more healthful organic fruits and vegetables for themselves

and their communities, then selling them at farmers' markets. All of this could be under the aegis of a semi-public or public agency. There is no limit to what a cleaner, cheaper energy source could achieve for our profession in the most immediate sense.

Innovation Three

Introduction of a happiness pill, equivalent in impact to the anti-aging pill. We certainly have enough dangerous happiness drugs and narcotics now, as will as an eager market for them. Why not capture this market with a drug that is less lethal and addicting? The soma "happiness" pill in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, for instance, was given to the populace to prevent them from thinking critically, especially from criticizing their totalitarian government. We have enough evidence about the crippling effects of tranquilizers that block

awareness of negative stimuli and ultimately undermine one's willpower and decision-making ability. Anti-drug campaigns and criminal sanctions have done little to dampen enthusiasm for illegal and legal drugs, as well as other narcotizing substances. Some people have even suggested banning tobacco and legalizing marijuana! Happy people, drugged or otherwise, are likely to be at ease with leisure time, looking at ways to enjoy it, filling time, not killing it through dangerous escapist drugs and hallucinogenics. The implications for our profession of dealing with a happier, longer-lived, healthier population are nothing short of explosive. For us, it would be a literal population explosion, as adults recreated the joy and spontaneity of children in their response to leisure-time pursuits.

Innovation Four

Self-sufficient moon or other extraterrestrial colonies. Although not touched on by the World Future Association, Toffler writes quite convincingly in Future Shock of self-sustaining underwater colonies populating our vast oceans and seas. With these two innovations, you can see the direct influence of science fiction. We can look at the impetus behind such colonies as twofold: a place for population expansion, a locus for performing environmentally "dirty" work, or a new frontier for exploration and adventure. Or, as is more likely, for both these kinds of goals. Toffler believes so keenly in the likelihood of underwater living that he suggests that we acclimate children today for such experiences by having them live in underwater environments for varying lengths of time as a regular part of

education. By the time today's children are adults, extraterrestrial or oceanic colonies are likely to exist, so plan for them now. It is intoxicating to think of the demands and possibilities for leisure-time pursuits in such environments, where one is more likely to be time-rich than in our earth-bound, frenetic lifestyles. This innovation alone could stimulate many a brainstorming session here on earth on how to live and cope with time-rich or timeless environments.

Finally, Innovation Five

A World Parliament to settle disputes among nations. If such an encompassing organization were possible and successful, it would release all the valuable resources--both human and other--that are sacrificed or consumed by political conflicts of varying magnitudes and severity. Just think in

smaller terms for a moment of the positive energy and time gained by reducing family arguments. Expand this to global proportions and imagine the tidal wave of positive force that we as a species could put to better uses. If a family is not eating up its leisure time quarreling or grumbling, preoccupied with enemies, people would be free for other more refreshing and creative activities. Worldwide, such an expansion of available time and energy among the family of mankind would release a creative renaissance in which our profession could potentially be at the center.

When dreaming of the future, there are not only dreams that do not come true, there are those that become nightmares instead. These too have to be reflected in futuristic thinking. Even more than the innovative possibilties, evidence of all these

disastrous likelihoods is with us already. It is easier to envision the worst than the best in futuristic thinking. This is not because we are naturally more pessimistic: the effort of forward thinking can be so demanding, because of an unfamiliarity with the process itself, that the doubled demand of adding imagination to speculation can be onerous. Thus, it seems to me that the drastic possibilities for the future flow more unbrokenly and unfortunately from our past and present. That is, there is little to surprise us, but much to forewarn us. That is the prime value of possibilities.

Now for the likely catastrophies:

Catastrophe One

World War III among the super powers, nuclear most likely, unless an even more catastrophic force is discovered. The implications of this occurrence have

been and continue to be well debated and dramatized. It would nullify all of the previous positive likelihoods in minutes, eliminating all concern with what would likely then be the untimate luxury or fantasy: leisure-time activities.

Catastrophe Two

A global depression, which could be brought on by an increased aggravation of the imbalances in trade. Or more horrendously and likely in our nation, the great sleeping giant of national debt awakens more fully. This indebtedness also has a preponderant effect on the world economy. If at one time The Year 2000 seemed fantastical, a trillion probably seemed just as far off. Now we are familiar with the latest and growing trillion-dollar figure for our national debt. Before the advent of computers and the national debt, a trillion was less familiar to us; it was

probably not even a part of your vocabulary as you grew up. It takes some thought even to write it out in figures, never mind trying to control it: 1,000,000,000,000.

Our profession and others in the so-called helping fields continue to feel the brunt of successive attempts to reduce national expenditures and to control the national debt. Whether we argue against massive and disproportionate defense expenditures and in favor of health, education and social problems still doesn't change the mammoth fact of our horrendous indebtedness. This is another sleeping giant that is waking and will not be quieted for many a decade. We have put ourselves and future generations in debt in our government's attempt to be everything to everyone, both here and abroad. The best direction we can take is away from dependency on

public monies and towards self-sufficiency and reliance. More about that later.

Catastrophe Three

A global race war, starting in South Africa and spreading to other racially mixed countries with unresolved racial problems, including our own. As a profession, we have been directly involved for several decades with racial issues, not only in urban areas but in smaller cities and towns where the segregation of nonwhites into ghettos and barrios is still the norm. On the occasion of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday this year, some 20,000 people marched in an all-white county in Georgia to protest racial bigotry and harrassment. All of us are quite familiar with our own home-grown versions of apartheid, so there is no need to elaborate. Since we strive to serve or educate all people within our service area or

colleges, the diminution of racial attitudes, behaviors, and decisions is within our power. And we must use this power. There is no excuse for attitudes of benign neglect or beliefs that time will magically erase such injustices. Must we go through another Civil Rights Era, one that is not likely to be confined to certain "hot" neighborhoods or countries? This third catastrophe is a real threat--not a nightmarish fantasy. It is one that is not likely to end with the supremacy of one race over another, but will involve the slaughter or execution of people based solely on their color - white and nonwhite. The outcome of such a global war is not an issue as much as a reality. Our role in preventing such a disastrous occurrence is manifest and can be exhibited not only in our professional activities, but in all aspects of our lives. We should earnestly and

consciously work to heal the racial sickness within ourselves, within our profession whenever we encounter it (and not merely when it is politically safe), and in our society. To serve all equally is a part of our Code of Ethics.

Catastrophe Four

Widespread terrorism, not only nuclear and political, but local and domestic. Recently, Chicago gang members were arrested for alleged criminal involvement with Libya. They apparently were trying to get Kadahfy's help to bring terrorist activity to Chicago! While it is not the purpose of this discussion to consider the possible roots of terrorism, we have to realize that it is likely to expand as those who seek more control over political and social issues resort to this suicidal strategy. Many issues that we naively confine to other countries

in our minds inevitably affect our society because of our widespread involvement or complicity with most of the world's nations. We are a global nation, more so than any other in the history of the world. Terrorism puts us on warning that global politics is no longer a one-way street, despite our horrific military might. More later about the necessity of politicizing our profession in a more narrow sense as we withdraw from dependency on the public till. In this respect, however, we must contend with the dangers and implications of widespread political piracy and destruction, both our own and others.

Catastrophe Five

A global plague, similar to the bubonic plague of the 17th century. When we recall that this deadly epidemic, which destroyed most of the European population over a prolonged period, was transmitted by

a flea, we should not deceive ourselves about the likelihood of such an epidemic ever occurring again. Why were there so many rats in Europe at this time, many infected with bubonic bacteria? One likely explanation was the serious depletion of the domestic cat population as a result of the witch burnings. Tampering with environmental checks and balances, not to mention in so murderous a fashion, brings consequences that even today we are little prepared to contend with.

Add to this sort of tampering the dilemma of medical and genetic research. Our faith in modern medicine and advanced biological research is ill placed if we consider that modern-day plague strains are likely to be escapees from a laboratory. As thorough a layman's knowledge as possible of the scope and frontiers of modern biological and chemical

research is essential. Otherwise, we are likely to be passive recipients of disastrous news or epidemics. Seeking scapegoats rather than solid information is not the solution to modern-day plagues, nor is blindly supporting further biomedical research. With AIDS, for example, our profession can be directly involved in countering the hysteria by providing many public, hygienically-related services, as well as by employing or serving those who might be considered dangerous to our health. Any complacency we had about modern medicine shielding us from such evils should be fairly well tattered by now. We shield ourselves, not by ridding our community of those we deem health hazards, but by supporting <u>responsible</u> research and ethical controls with our public monies.

<u>Projections and Predictions</u>

Predicting for the future can be a fail-safe

exercise if you predict far enough ahead so you can't be held responsible for the outcome! Fortunately and unfortunately,many of these futuristic predictions are imminent in seed or actuality already, so none of them have an element of remoteness or fantasy unless we strive to enhance or deter them. Although the world, at times, seems out of control--and the future seems likely to be worse--you must realize that all of us create the future: we encourage it by our activity or passivity, our awareness or ignorance, our defiance or apathy. And we certainly affect it by our habits of futuristic dreaming and working to make these dreams come true.

Focusing on what changes are aleady obvious, which changes are likely to continue or expand, and those not obvious now but likely to develop, here are some of the situations we are likely to encounter as a profession:

- In the future all enterprises, whether public or private, will concentrate even more on controlling their costs of goods and labor. This means as a profession we will continue to face limited financial resources. We are not going through a financial phase from which we shall emerge resettled in former financial niches. Rather, we are dragging out the finale of full public support for our activities and services. It is up to us, and it has been for some while, to begin to be our own financial entrepreneurs, rather than to confine our visions to an ever-narrowing public largess.
- The demand for child care services will increase dramatically. The under-age-six group in our population is expected to be 23,000,000 by 1990. That is merely three years away. The

implications for our profession are challenging, especially if we seek to loosen our dependency on public monies. We are in an excellent position to offer specific or comprehensive day care services, programs that start with childhood and carry one throughout adulthood and advantaged age. Many hospitals and nursing homes already run adult day care centers, offering services comparable to children's centers for the other end of life. More and more opportunities to provide human services are ours. These will be and are provided by private organizations in the vacuum left by public agency indifference or withdrawal.

- People will be healthier, live longer and more active lives, and be better fed and nourished. There will be less smoking, less consumption of

animal fats and protein. Overall, we will be dealing with a population that is more health-conscious and more knowledgeable about the body. A recent survey indicated that one out of three adults is interested in wellness. Health clubs and spas, as you know, are a multi-million dollar business. Sports, including participatory sports, are a 12 billion dollar industry. Tens of thousands show up to run in marathons or brief kilometer races. Thirty-two states presently have a Governor's Council on Fitness. There was no way to know thirty years ago that the philosophies and advice of such as Adelle Davis in Let's Eat Right to Keep Fit or those of our own Professor Cureton at Illinois were early indicators of an accelerating preoccupation with wellness and

well-being that shows no signs yet of abating. More lately corporations and government agencies are becoming increasingly involved in the health and lifestyle habits of their workers. Corporate Fitness and Recreation magazine is but one example of this involvement. Business and industry leaders, along with insurance companies, are interested in controlling the staggering cost of medical benefits, as well as in reducing sick time while increasing productivity. How people live on and off the job is directly related to their health and well-being. Without invading the privacy of their workers, companies and agencies are trying to influence them to indulge in more healthful habits, diets and pastimes. As programmers or educators in leisure services, we

are going to be dealing with a more dynamic, active, demanding population, not only physically healthier, but psychologically, mentally, and spiritually healthier.

- By 1990, again only three years hence, there will be 6,000,000 fewer teenagers in this country. All of our carefully crafted focus on teenagers these past decades will now have to shift to include younger and much older groups as well--and not simply in a peripheral sense. Entire market strategies and fashions will shift to reflect this shrinking age group. And remember, the older population is likely to be "old" more in number than in spirit.
- As public monies become more and more constrained--as they are likely to be--we will have to become more entrepreneurial. Many of my

colleagues actively resist such advice. They do not want to be dabbed with the brush of salesmanship in any way whatsoever. I don't think we have a choice but to sell ourselves unless we want to survive as a shrunken elite from the past. If you believe in what you are doing or if you are truly interested in the existence of leisure services as an active component of community and intellectual life, then the necessity for defending and selling that concept will become even more critical. You can be certain no one else will do the selling for you. We will have to earn money for our services, pay our own way, and be more cost-and profit-oriented. We can draw on a broad field of information and know-how from business and industry to augment our value and

profitability as a profession. We will shift from providing public services with public monies to being semi-public, both in funding and practice. The demand for a wide range of human services already exists, so why sit back and watch these being provided, one by one, by private agencies and business? Our profession is literally up for grabs and will be a thing of the past in the future unless we become even more involved in leisure service provision and creation.

Proposals and Directions

As educators and providers of leisure services through parks and recreation, we are going to have to get our hands and self-images dirty. We have to become more involved in the formation of public policy--which is politics. This can no longer be a dirty word in our vocabulary. Other leaders will

continue to make these decisions for us if we don't. And we may not like the results. We certainly haven't agreed with decisions made for us in the past. We are already involved in issues of open space, environment, housing, energy, aging, health policies, and so forth. Now we have to be less passive observers and more creators and synthesizers. We are the obvious profession to do this.

One of the most frustrating aspects of our profession has been our inability to initiate action. These matters are generally decided in political centers, places we approach more as tourists than participants. Neither the Halls of Congress nor the Town Hall should be the locus of our field trips or research. These should be places where we actively begin to participate in forming the laws and legislation that affect our profession. Are we politically effective at this time? I think not.

That assessment should and must change.

As educators and practitioners, we will also have to take a more active role in educating our citizens for leisure. That is, we must teach people about leisure and its import. We are the first society in the history of the world to offer such unprecedented leisure to such a wide array of citizens. Leisure is no longer a benefit of the rich or powerful. It is something all of us now contend with. Our profession, along with others in the human services and the behavorial sciences, is ideally equipped to begin this education task. Again, it does not make sense to watch others fill this need for us. Let us not become a profession that orchestrates its own demise through inertia, passivity, and lack of vision. We have to teach children and young adults how to live, not how to make a living, which is becoming a less

time-consuming part of most lives. This is likely to be even more so in the future.

Education for leisure will include an emphasis on art and cultural appreciation for everyone, not only those training for the artistic professions. We need educated audiences as well as performers in all the arts and crafts. Self-expression should not be limited to a professional cadre; it should be available to everyone, regardless of their ultimate competence. The more familiar people are with the arts, the more wholesome and appreciative an audience they will be. We must expand our concept of education: we are not merely training the young; we are educating throughout a lifetime as more and more older adults return to schools. The demand for higher education for older citizens will demand expanded use of our schools and community colleges. We are likely

to have schools open 24 hours a day as supermarkets and other businesses are now.

Research and Evaluation Needs

As educators especially, we shall have to m ke an even greater effort to evaluate the services we provide. We have to know whether our programs make a difference in enhancing people's styles of life, their productivity, their sense of achievement and well-being. That is, do our programs achieve what we think they should? This has always been an ambiguous area in parks and recreation research, burdened with more assumptions than concepts. These assumptions have to be tested and evaluated if we are going to convince others of the essential worth of parks and recreation leisure services.

We will have to concentrate on more research and study of human behavior in leisure settings--what

people do with their free time, why they do it, the cultural assumptions about free time, and so forth. This vast and very intriguing subject could add substantial information to the ongoing study of human behaviors and needs. We have to identify leisure needs and possibilities both now and for the future, as well as provide standards and guidelines for their evaluation and effectiveness. As educators, we will have to re-evaluate our curriculum continually in terms of preparing students for leisure leadership in our profession and in society.

We need more research on the economics of leisure and how this affects our communities and businesses. This field has already been inundated by economists; it behooves us to examine that as well. It is vital that we not become a profession that feeds off others' findings, that is always second-best! We are too

derivative for our own good, a quality not likely to guarantee our growth or survival.

We must cooperate and become involved more actively with national and professional associations whose purposes interact or overlap with ours: defenders of our wildlife heritage, of those involved with environmental protection, senior citizen associations, and so forth. We should be even more actively involved and supportive of groups such as the NRPA and AALR.

Growth Areas that Affect Leisure Services

Generally, several major areas of growth are already with us, and their effects are likely to be felt more dramatically in the future:

- Computers and support services
- Health care, nutrition, and fitness
- Leisure services and parks and recreation

opportunities

- Financial services
- Human resource development and management
- Lawyers and accountants

Summary

Adaptive behavior and innovation are the most necessary skills during any transitional period. During these years of resource constraint, it is immeasurably important that our imaginations expand as everything else shrinks. While there are limited funds for traditional services and programs, it is surprising how much money is available to support new and innovative approaches. Unfortunately, many of these ideas and proposals are coming from private businesses and private contracts or from administrators and employees who desert public agencies for the more lucrative atmosphere of private

enterprise. Thus, the need for imagination and innovation in the face of change cannot be overstressed.

For the most part, our generation has had to come to terms with the nearly overwhelming consequences of the actions and values to previous generations. Not all of these consequences are bad, however. We are faced with unprecedented possibilities for expansion and reduction, growth and destruction. In fact, a major reality of our times and of futuristic thinking is the split perception these possibilities demand. On the one hand, we have to contend with serious breakdowns and depletions in our natural environment and political economy; on the other hand, there exists a solidly placed euphoria about all that is pos ible to achieve despite these limitations. Our tension as a people is made up of these positive and negative

valences. At times the split within ourselves between despair and excitement or cynicism and enthusiasm might be too much for most of us. We might long for a more old-fashioned ideal of central focus or dogma. When the atom was smashed, so too were our imaginations smashed into a mosaic or kaleidoscope of visions and images. It is the sheer wealth of information and possibilities that we have to content with that may make us long, at times, for neatly predetermined niches and truisms.

What we face now, and most likely more so in the future, is an unprecedented array of information and situations. Reacting and interacting to a more complex exterior reality requires an equally rich inner imagination. Dreaming of the future, the best and the worst, exercises our imagination, makes us mentally flexible and resilient in the face of

change. The future may indeed be more of the present and even less of the past. But, by far, it is going to be more of the unknown evolving into the known and familiar. This unknown is not an unalterable destiny awaiting us, but lies already within each of us. Inner exploration is our most urgent frontier. The fireworks of ideas, inventions, plans, discoveries, and recombinations are some of its earliest fruits. Let's shape the future, rather than nostalgically regretting the past. We can only be a part of a future if we actively encourage and participate now in its emergence. Countless generations of people led short lives that were similar from birth to death. We are the first generations who have multiple lives to live: born in one world, coming of age in another, heading into yet another. That excitement and challenge I intend not to miss, and I'm going to stay with the procession as long as I can!

American Association for
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an association of

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